Skinny Love

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/47054938.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Extended Universe - Fandom, Charlie Countryman (2013), Adam (2009)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Nigel (Charlie Countryman)/Adam Raki
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Mischa Lecter, Adam Raki, Nigel (Charlie Countryman), Alana Bloom, Freddie Lounds, Dr. Frederick Chilton, Mason Verger, Darko (Charlie Countryman)
Additional Tags:	High School, Fluff and Angst, but very light angst, Bullying, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Will Graham Loves Hannibal Lecter, Happy Ending, School Dance
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of HEU High School AU
Stats:	Published: 2023-05-09 Completed: 2023-05-24 Words: 12,602 Chapters: 4/4

Skinny Love

by squeakybones

Summary

Hannibal was calm, composed, and stoic. Hannibal was a source of stability, a never-ending well of logic and common sense. Hannibal was frustratingly unshakable and in control.

Or at least, Mischa had believed Hannibal to be all of these things, until the day she had first brought Will Graham home.

Will and Hannibal clearly like each other but are both too stubborn to do anything about it. Mischa decides she'll have to step in to encourage the inevitable.

Notes

Skinny love: When two people have very strong feelings for each other but are too shy to show or admit it.

This is a follow-up to my earlier fic, Truth or Dare. You can read this one without reading the first, but this story does take place after the events of Truth or Dare.

This one is focused on Will and Hannibal, but Adam and Nigel do make an appearance in later chapters (because I love them and can't help adding them anywhere I can!)

Finally, this fic took me in a bit of an unexpected direction, so it's longer than planned and a little different than Truth or Dare, which seemed fine to me since I've always found the dynamic between Will and Hannibal very different than the dynamic between Adam and Nigel.

Anyway, let me know what you think! :)

Chapter 1

Mischa Lecter's life had seen its fair share of turmoil and instability. Orphaned at such a young age and forced to move to a new continent with a distant uncle she had never met and learn a language she had never spoken, Mischa had had no choice but to become adaptable.

And yet, there had been one constant in her life. One reliable source of stability and security that had always been there for her to lean on. Regardless of how bad things had been, how traumatic or terrifying, how alone or isolated they had felt, Hannibal had remained a steadfast and immovable force. Even during the worst years, when their situation was seemingly at its worse, when they found themselves homeless and her brother had mysteriously lost his voice, he had still found ways to ensure that Mischa was taken care of.

Hannibal was calm, composed, and stoic. Hannibal was a source of stability, a never-ending well of logic and common sense. Hannibal was *frustratingly* unshakable and in control. Or at least, Mischa had believed Hannibal to be all of these things, until the day she had first brought Will Graham home.

After months of tentative friendship, Mischa had finally convinced the anti-social introvert that, yes, he *was* welcome in her home and that, no, he would *not* be in the way if he came over after school to study.

They had both been standing in the kitchen talking when Hannibal entered the room. And there was Will, laughing brightly, head tossed back, wielding one of his rare blinding smiles, haloed by bright rays of afternoon sun from the kitchen window. A stranger likely wouldn't have noticed, but Mischa was no stranger — she knew Hannibal better than anyone, and Hannibal had been *affected*.

Her brother had clumsily stopped in his tracks, mouth slightly ajar, hypnotized by the younger boy he had caught laughing in his kitchen. Hannibal, whose mind always ran as smoothly as an intricate well-oiled piece of machinery, found himself frozen in place, completely tongue-tied. And Mischa had never been more thrilled in her life.

"Do you need something, Hannibal?"

At her words, her brother quickly snapped out of his haze and pulled himself back together. By the time Will had turned towards the intruder in the room, Hannibal was back to his usual polite self, his perfect posture, and his composed demeanor. But Mischa had seen it — the temporary lapse in control.

Will couldn't have noticed, but she had. And based on the look Hannibal had given her when their eyes had crossed, Hannibal knew she had noticed as well.

And so, Mischa continued to bring Will to their home and, as she had hoped, Hannibal continued to do what could only be described as "ogling." Eventually, their uncle caught on as well, to Mischa's obvious amusement and Hannibal's more subtle but still apparent frustration. Will Graham became a common topic of conversation in their household, if only

in attempts to rile Hannibal up. But of course, neither Mischa nor her uncle could rile Hannibal up. He was unflappable. That is, until Will Graham entered the room, at which point his brain seemed to transform to jelly.

As Mischa saw it, no one could blame her for attempting to bring forth the inevitable. Because as enamored as Hannibal obviously was, Mischa had also noticed the unusual shine to Will's eyes anytime he and Hannibal spoke, or the slight flush to his cheeks when Hannibal paid him the slightest bit of attention. One particular day, Hannibal had given Will a rare compliment and Mischa's friend had nearly died choking on a sip of water.

As far as Mischa was concerned, the two idiots were becoming a danger to themselves. Any day now, one would get flustered enough to give themselves a brain aneurysm. Mischa understood that she would have to take it upon herself to ensure these two ended up together one way or another. It seemed *she* would have to be the sensible Lecter sibling for once.

On Will's very first day at his new school, Mischa Lecter had done what no one had dared do before. She had decided that Will Graham was *interesting* — that he was worth getting to know.

Standing in front of yet another strange classroom full of curious faces, in yet another unwelcoming town his dad had promised would be "the one," Will had already braced himself for the usual, inevitable isolation that came with being the outsider.

"Everyone," had announced his bubbly new homeroom teacher, "this is Will Graham. Will recently moved here from New Orleans, Louisiana." The news was shared with sickeningly sweet childish enthusiasm, as if Will's relocation were a thrilling adventure and not the sign of an unstable household.

"They all dress like that in Louisiana?" had asked a smug, mean-looking boy with messy blond hair, eliciting a few snickers from the class.

Will had looked up at the words. Expensive clothes, a pretentious smirk, surrounded by a small crowd of smug lackeys, wielding a gaze that could only be described as slightly unhinged. Will had met boys like this before.

"I'd ask if they all have a face like an unseasoned pork chop in Baltimore, but looking around, it looks like you're the only one."

The classroom became eerily quiet, jaws dropping to the floor as Mason's face grew increasingly red. The only sound was the loud, cackling laughter coming from a pretty blonde girl sitting in the front row. Surprised, Will had looked over to see her doubling over in her chair, wiping a tear from a sharply defined cheekbone.

"*Mason the pork chop*!" she had exclaimed between bouts of laughter.

Mischa Lecter, it turned out, was the one person in that classroom who *could* laugh at Mason. The Vergers had made quite the fortune for themselves, but the Lecters — whose uncle still

held the title of Count and who boasted a vast and powerful social circle — were *old* money.

But most importantly, Mischa also had an older brother. A dangerous older brother who, despite his seemingly civil and composed demeanor, had sent one of the school's linebackers to the hospital with a dislocated shoulder, a broken nose, and three broken fingers after he had looked up Mischa's skirt during a school assembly. No one had seen it happen, and Cordell had ardently sworn he had just *fallen down*, but everyone knew it had been Mischa's brother.

And yet, that wasn't what Will found to be most unsettling about his new friend's older brother. The *real* issue was that Mischa's older brother was breathtakingly gorgeous. With sharp cheekbones, warm amber eyes, a strong wide frame, and frustratingly perfectly coiffed hair, Hannibal Lecter looked like everything sloppy, messy, disheveled Will Graham was decidedly not.

When Hannibal had first walked into the Lecter kitchen, wearing a perfectly fitted shirt and flatteringly form-fitting slacks, Will had immediately become aware of his own ratty jeans and rumpled flannel. Things only got worst when Will realized that it went beyond the pristine appearance and that Hannibal Lecter was infuriatingly put-together and competent in *all* aspects of his life.

Perfect grades, infuriatingly brilliant and well-spoken, loved by both faculty and students, surprisingly athletic, and outrageously handsome, Hannibal Lecter was seemingly perfect and Will *hated* him for it. Will who had struggled and compromised for everything in his life, for whom everything seemed to be overly-complicated and out of reach. Will who adults mistrusted and other students sneered at, who wore second-hand and thrifted clothes because he and his dad could barely afford three meals a day, let alone fancy new outfits. Seeing Hannibal cruise through life as if he had been perfectly tailored for success was a bitter reminder of Will's innumerable flaws.

But what bothered Will the most — though he would never admit it — and the main reason he avoided Mischa's older brother as much as possible, was that Will was irrevocably and maddeningly attracted to Hannibal Lecter. Since their first meeting in Mischa's kitchen where they had exchanged awkward, forced pleasantries, the older boy had been on Will's mind day and night. *Especially* at night, often causing Will to wake panting, covered in sweat, and harder than he had previously imagined possible.

Of course, Will was no idiot and knew better than to entertain childish romantic fantasies about his best friend's attractive older brother. There was no world in which Hannibal Lecter would *ever* be romantically interested in frumpy, awkward Will Graham. Thinking otherwise would be pure self-sabotage, especially since Mischa was the closest friend he had. The last thing he wanted was to jeopardize that friendship to get his heart broken by someone wildly out of his league.

And so, Will bitterly pined from a distance, avoiding Hannibal whenever possible. When he did have to interact with the older boy, he spoke as little as possible and kept things brief, often to the point of being rude or unpleasant. Why bother anyway. The only thing the two boys could ever be was friends, which Will knew would never be enough for him. Not as long as Hannibal Lecter continued looking like the living embodiment of Adonis himself.

Will runs his fingers through the lavishly plush carpet of the Lecter living room as he and Mischa sit on the floor, surrounded by their books and school assignments. Somehow, she has once again talked him into coming over after school to study, luring him with the promise of fancy, expensive snacks (where else was he supposed to find truffle-flavored popcorn) and help with his algebra assignment. And he *really* needs help with that algebra assignment.

As Mischa shares some recent gossip — something about this year's upcoming Winter Formal and the absolutely ridiculous theme suggested by Jimmy Price, the head of the planning committee — Will hears soft footsteps coming down the hall and braces himself for what he had been dreading since their arrival.

A few moments later, Hannibal casually strolls into the living room in bright red gym shorts, so short they barely reach halfway to his thighs, and a white sweat-drenched t-shirt. Will tries his best not to gape at the older boy, averting his eyes before he combusts on the spot.

"Hello, Will. I hadn't realized you and Mischa were here," says Hannibal, calm as ever, and Will immediately hates himself for how flustered the deep, rich sound of Hannibal's voice makes him.

"Right," responds Mischa flatly before Will has a chance to fully compose himself. "And what have you been doing exactly?"

"I went for a run."

"Hmm," replies a seemingly skeptic Mischa. "And was there something you needed in the living room? Or were you just taking the scenic route to your bedroom?"

A tense silence follows Mischa's words and Will looks up to see both siblings locked in what can only be described as a stare-off.

"No need to be rude, Mischa. I'll give you both some privacy if you'd like," Hannibal finally responds in his usual composed, but now somewhat cooler, tone.

Hannibal gracefully turns back towards the door, to Will's simultaneous relief and disappointment, and is about to leave the room when Mischa stops him.

"Actually, Hannibal."

Will turns to look at her only to find Mischa staring directly back at him with a familiar mischievous twinkle in her eye. This can't be good. With a quizzically raised eyebrow, Hannibal turns back towards his sister.

"Will could use some help with his algebra homework. You know I'm dreadful at anything having to do with math. Could you give him a hand while I get us more snacks?"

Will is so shocked at Mischa's words he gets dangerously close to choking on thin air. What the hell was she *doing*.

“What are you talking about, Mischa. I came over specifically because you promised you’d help me get an A on this stupid assignment.”

“Exactly — and that’s where Hannibal comes in. He’s a total math whiz, can do this stuff in his sleep,” she says nonchalantly with a dismissive wave of her hand. She then looks up with wide eyes, as if only now realizing the mix-up. “You didn’t think *I* was going to be the one to help you with Algebra, did you?” she adds with dramatically feigned confusion that Will immediately sees through.

He’s usually pretty good at reading people but Mischa always manages to throw him off somehow. Now that he’s sitting on the floor like a child, tongue-tied at the sight of a scantily clad and sweaty Hannibal, he can’t believe he fell for one of Mischa’s ruses once again.

“Don’t you remember that math quiz we had last semester?” Yes, he does. Mischa had cheated off of him during the test and they had *both* failed. He’s not quite sure how he managed to forget it, but looking at Mischa’s smug face, he decides this whole thing is still somehow entirely her fault.

“We both know I’m complete rubbish at this stuff,” she adds with a self-satisfied flip of her long shiny hair.

“Now, don’t sell yourself short, Mischa,” interjects Hannibal with the closest thing to an eye-roll Will has ever seen from the older boy. “You’re very skilled in your own way. Quite talented at influencing others and bending things to your will, for instance,” he says with a pointed stare. “A great politician in the making.”

Despite his sweaty gym attire, Hannibal gracefully crosses the lavish living room to seat himself on the expensive green velvet couch Will is currently leaning on.

“Or maybe even a tabloid reporter. The world is your oyster, after all.”

Mischa, less proper and civilized than her brother, does roll her eyes at Hannibal’s words.

“Careful, Hannibal. I wouldn’t put any ideas in my head you don’t want me to follow through on.” She gives Hannibal a mischievous look as she leaves the room. “Imagine having to explain to your fancy colleagues that Doctor Hannibal Lecter’s sister is just a tacky tabloid reporter for the *National Enquirer*.” She walks out of the room towards the kitchen before exclaiming, “Or worse, *Tattle Crime*!”

Will and Hannibal are the only two left in the room and Will is suddenly aware that this is the first time he and Hannibal have been alone since they’ve met. Will gulps audibly as he tries to think up an excuse that will allow him to escape from the Lecter house and run all the way home.

“Will?”

Will looks up at the sound of his name to see Hannibal smiling at him softly, hand motioning to the empty space next to him on the couch. “I don’t want to impose, but I would be happy to help if you would like. It’s up to you.”

And Will finds himself unable to decline. Hannibal's hair has fallen out of it's usual coif after his run and now falls across his forehead, making him look soft and approachable. Will makes the mistake of looking the older boy in the eyes and finds himself hypnotized by Hannibal's warm, amber gaze. Without his consent, his treacherous body raises itself off the ground and plops itself next to Hannibal on the couch.

Hannibal's smile widens as he grabs the algebra homework out of Will's hand. "Let's see what we're working with," he says softly as he skims through the assignment.

As Hannibal reads, his leg shifts slightly and his knee softly rests against Will's, who shivers at the contact. Will's heart races as he tries to determine whether he should move his leg away or not. The touch is so slight and they are both sitting so close, it must have been accidental. But Will has been thinking about touching Hannibal for months now and even this small contact sets his skin on fire.

Will sits completely still, stuck in an anxious limbo trying to determine what to do, when Hannibal's leg leans more heavily onto his. He closes his eyes and exhales shakily. Now *that* had to be on purpose, right?

But before Will can muster up the courage to react, Hannibal pulls away to grab a pen from the side table and starts walking Will through the first question on the assignment. Will tries to snap out of whatever haze he's slipped into to keep up with Hannibal's explanations.

Fortunately — and frustratingly — Mischa was right and Hannibal knows the material inside out. In fact, he's so good at explaining it that despite the traumatic shock Hannibal's bare thighs caused to Will's brain, he still manages to understand everything Hannibal shows him and finishes the assignment.

When the teacher returns his graded assignment a few days later, Will doesn't even bother looking at the grade. He knows it's an A. Will knows better than to assume anything Hannibal Lecter put his attention to would ever be less than perfect.

Chapter 2

The following week is… odd. Even though they go to the same school, outside of his few trips to Mischa's house, Will had rarely crossed paths with Hannibal in the past. Since his last trip to the Lecter household, however, he finds himself running into the older boy on a daily basis.

Even more baffling, Hannibal now stops to speak with him. Every. Single. Day.

He first inquires after Will's algebra assignment; the following day he wonders whether Will and Mischa will be over after school; and once the pattern has been established, Hannibal stops him every time they cross paths to ask how his day is going.

On one particular day, he stops Will to ask him questions about Winston's recent injury, which confuses him since he's fairly certain he's never mentioned any of his dogs to Hannibal in the past. Will answers as best he can but is so taken off guard by the question that he remains frozen in place once Hannibal has walked away.

As he stares into the distance trying to process what the fuck *that* was about, Freddie Lounds places a hand on his shoulder and leans in conspiratorially.

"I know — I can't believe he's paying attention to you either."

Will jumps at the unexpected touch and quickly brushes Freddie's hand off his shoulder.

"You know Freddie, most people are too busy with their own social lives to over-analyze mundane conversations between random people in the hallway."

"Is that so? For someone who just had a 'mundane' conversation, you sure look pretty flustered, Graham."

Will can feel the heat crawling up his neck as he finally turns to glare menacingly at Freddie.

"Maybe I just get flustered when pestering idiots invade my personal space and touch me with their grubby hands."

Freddie lifts her hand to tap a red manicured finger to her chin as if seriously considering Will's words.

"Hmm. I don't think so." She drops her hand and turns back to him with a raised eyebrow and wicked grin. "I just think Hannibal Lecter's got you all *hot and bothered* with his designer wardrobe and boring small talk."

Will scoffs and rolls his eyes despite the fact that, as usual, Freddie isn't all that off the mark.

"Not that I get why he's even bothering since you're clearly socially deficient," she adds with a small frown.

At those words, like the eavesdropping snake Will has always known him to be, Frederick Chilton invites himself into their conversation to gift them with his unwanted opinion.

“You don’t think Lecter is seriously interested in Will Graham, do you?” And if the words weren't enough, the sneer on his face makes it clear he finds the idea completely preposterous.

“No offense, Graham, but there is no world in which someone like Hannibal Lecter dates someone like you.” Will is about to tell him to get lost when Chilton smirks and adds, “It is a pretty funny joke on Hannibal’s part though,” and Will feels the blood drain from his face.

Will knows Chilton is a babbling, insecure idiot — he should know better than to take anything he says seriously — and yet the shame he feels at Chilton’s words is paralyzing. He hadn’t actually thought Hannibal was interested in him — of course he isn’t — but he hadn’t considered that all this new attention might be some kind of joke. That Will himself — the very idea of being interested in him — could be the punchline to some elaborate prank.

His brain suddenly reviews and reevaluates every social interaction he has had with Mischa’s brother, looking for clues or anything suggesting he might have misread the situation. But Hannibal is so hard to read — so controlled and composed — that Will always struggles to figure out what the boy is thinking. And yet, he had never considered that this entire time, Hannibal might have been thinking he was just a joke.

Remembering where he is — and more importantly, who he’s with — Will quickly pulls himself out of his momentary panic. He can spiral about this later when Frederick Chilton isn’t eying him like a starving hyena.

“I hadn’t realized you had such strong opinions about who Hannibal should or shouldn’t be spending his time with.” Trying to compose himself, Will does his best to seem as nonchalant as possible despite the rage and hurt blooming in his chest.

He leans in and lowers his voice to a mock whisper. “You know, I can put in a good word for you if you think your chances are better.”

Will’s words seem to hit a nerve as Chilton’s face turns beet red. Freddie, who’s still standing by Will’s side, tries to hide her snicker with the back of her hand. Will’s victory is short-lived, however, as Chilton quickly recovers and turns to get someone else’s attention.

“Hey Mason — we need your help with something.” Will’s stomach drops as Mason Verger turns towards them, all wild eyes and wicked grin. “Do you think Will Graham has any chance with Hannibal Lecter?”

“Ha! Now *that’s* a funny joke.”

From that moment on, to Will’s absolute horror, *everyone* seems to have an opinion about him and Hannibal. Getting a sick thrill out of torturing Will, Chilton and Mason broach the topic with anyone who will listen, blabbing on about the *hilarious* joke Hannibal Lecter is pulling on Will.

To make things worse, while the opinions vary, they all seem to agree on one thing — Will and Hannibal simply don't make sense. As if Will hadn't already known that himself.

The gossip doesn't seem to reach Hannibal, or if it does, it doesn't seem to affect Hannibal's daily drop-ins, but that doesn't matter. Will can barely look Hannibal in the eye anymore and cuts every conversation as short as he possibly can.

He keeps telling himself that this isn't a big deal, that he doesn't care what everyone else thinks, that he always knew Hannibal would never be interested in someone like him, but he can't help but feel angry, and ashamed, and embarrassed nonetheless.

Biology is one of Will's favorite classes. Not only is he a natural at it, but none of the most annoying people in his grade — Freddie, Chilton, Mason — have opted to take the class. It also helps that his lab partner is Adam Raki who, while a bit awkward at times, is clearly a genius. On their first day of class, Adam had introduced himself with a very formal handshake, giving Will his full name, and immediately explaining that he disliked direct eye contact. He and Will had hit it off right away.

The only downside to being in this class is that Mischa doesn't take biology, but with everything happening recently, that doesn't bother Will as much as it might have in the past. Mischa refuses to understand why Will is so frustrated with her brother and keeps telling him he's "overthinking the whole thing." As far as he's concerned, he could use some space from *both* Lecter siblings at the moment.

"Hello, Will. How was your weekend?" greets Adam as Will sets his things down and takes his seat next to the other boy at the lab table.

"Oh, you know. More of the same." His weekend had started with anxious ruminations about Hannibal, followed by vivid and inappropriate daydreams about the older boy, only to end with more anxious ruminations about his unshakable obsession with his best friend's older brother. The whole thing had been exhausting and it's the absolute last thing he wants to talk about. "How was your weekend, Adam?"

Adam lights up at the question, smiling brightly as a light blush rises to his cheeks.

"Nigel took me on another date," he says softly as the index finger of his right hand taps lightly on the tabletop. "We went star-gazing. He drove us to a large empty field close to where he lives. He brought snacks and a blanket so that we could be comfortable and I brought my telescope and showed him how to use it and we looked at the stars -"

There's a sparkle in Adam's eyes as he stares off into the distance recounting his date with his boyfriend. Will feels happy for him. If anyone deserves a nice, healthy relationship, it's someone as kind as Adam.

"- and then we kissed for a really long time. It distracted from the star gazing but I didn't mind." Adam pauses for a second as if considering something before adding, "I think we're going to have sex soon."

Will hadn't expected that last part and feels both his eyebrows raise at Adam's blunt statement.

"Is that… Do you feel ready for that?"

Adam's eyes quickly shift to Will's face without making full eye contact, locking right above his right eyebrow.

"I don't know. But I really want to. I was very sexually aroused when we were kissing this weekend."

Will isn't fast enough to stop the sharp huff of laughter that escapes him, but Adam doesn't seem to mind.

"Well… You and Nigel seem pretty solid. As long as you both want to and feel like it's the right thing, I don't see - "

"Hello, Will."

Will stops mid-sentence and turns abruptly at the interruption, immediately recognizing the deep, rich sound of Hannibal's voice. He had been avoiding the older boy all day, sneaking around school hallways and taking longer routes to his classes to avoid running into him.

Foolishly, he had been under the assumption that he would be safe once he made it to class but of course, nothing was stopping Hannibal from simply walking in and finding him there. He had just never done it before. Probably because, as far as Will remembered, none of his classes were in this part of the school.

"What are you doing here? None of your classes are in this part of the building."

Will knows he's being rude but he's too annoyed to care. He tells himself Hannibal must to be used to it by now anyway. And regardless, what's he even doing here? If this is part of whatever elaborate joke he's playing, there's no one here to witness it — Adam definitely won't care about something like that.

"I hadn't realized you knew where my classes were," replies Hannibal with a subtle smirk and Will feels himself start to blush. "I was walking back from the library when I passed this classroom and saw you. I thought I would say hello. I hope I'm not interrupting."

He looks over at Adam who is now busy scribbling something in one of his notebooks.

"You are but that's OK," states Adam without looking up from his notes. "Will was just telling me I should have sex with my boyfriend."

Will has rarely seen Hannibal truly taken off guard but, based on how wide his eyes are and the way his mouth hangs open, he would say Hannibal is utterly shocked. It's such a treat to see him like this that Will can't stop himself from laughing at the sight. Clearly, Hannibal hasn't met Adam.

Adam, who doesn't seem to fully understand why Will is laughing, looks at him with a small, hesitant smile, unsure how to react.

"It's fine, Adam. I don't think Hannibal was expecting you to say that, but it's his own fault for cutting in on people's conversations."

He turns back to the older boy expecting to be on the receiving end of an annoyed or frustrated look, but instead finds a warm smile and fondness in Hannibal's eyes as if the older boy is charmed by Will's laughter. His gaze locks with Hannibal's and he finds himself unable to look away. Will tries to spot mischievousness or mockery in his expression but the look Hannibal gives him seems to be filled with nothing but softness, warmth, and fascination. They stand there, completely speechless for some time until the teacher walks in and interrupts them.

"Hannibal, how lovely of you to drop by. Is there anything I can help with, were you looking for - "

She seems to notice Will for the first time and her smile immediately transforms into a suspicious scowl.

"Is Mr. Graham bothering you, Hannibal?" The soft tone she had used with Hannibal has now returned to the harsh one Will typically gets from her.

Will rolls his eyes and lets out a frustrated "What did - " before Hannibal cuts him off.

"Not at all, Mrs. Purnell. Will and I are working on a school project together. I was simply stopping by to get his advice on something. I'll leave now and get out of your way." He smiles ruefully at Will as he turns towards the door and leaves the classroom.

"Oh, you're never in the way Hannibal. Drop by anytime," Purnell calls after him and Will can't help but grimace at how enamored she sounds. It really is that easy for him, isn't it. She had gobbled up Hannibal's lie as if he had served her a Michelin star dish. He had everyone wrapped so tightly around his little finger, who was Will to think he wasn't in the exact same boat.

Purnell gives him one last frown, which Will meets with a glare of his own, before walking to the front of the class to her desk. God knows why she's always so suspicious of him. He's probably the top student in her class.

"I think he likes you."

Adam's words pull Will out of his train of thought and he turns to the other boy with a confused look on his face.

"What?"

"Hannibal," replies Adam calmly. "I think he likes you, Will. You should be nicer to him."

"Trust me, Adam. There is absolutely no way Hannibal Lecter likes me."

A small frown appears on Adam's face and he looks confused for a moment.

"Are you sure? The way he looked at you — that's the way Nigel looks at me. And I know Nigel likes me, he tells me all the time."

Will has seen Nigel look at Adam. It's so intense it's almost concerning — like someone who's been starved their whole life finally laying their eyes on an all-you-can-eat buffet with crab legs and a salad bar. If Will didn't know any better, he'd be concerned that Adam was actually at risk of being gobbled up.

"Nigel is a different person, Adam," replies Will with a heavy sigh. "And of course Nigel likes you, you're great, he'd be crazy not to."

"If that's true for me, there's no reason it wouldn't be true for you as well. You're a good person too, Will."

Will tries to give Adam a smile but feels that it doesn't quite reach his eyes. He appreciates Adam's kind words but knows better than to believe them. He just has to look back towards Mrs. Purnell at the front of the classroom, still eying him suspiciously, to remember that "a good person" is the last thing most people see when they look at him.

And yet, when Hannibal had looked at him earlier, he could have sworn that the older boy's eyes were seeing a good person. That they were screaming *my person*. Will quickly shakes away the thought as he opens up his own notebook.

Chapter 3

“Hello, Will. Mischa.”

Will rolls his eyes as he places his bland ham and cheese sandwich back into the beat-up Tupperware container he brought from home.

Hannibal had encroached on every aspect of his life over the last few weeks. Will had been accosted in the hallways between classes, on his way home after school, during some of his classes — the other day, he had walked out of the bathroom only to find Hannibal casually leaning against a locker, waiting for him. “I do hope that’s water on your hands,” he had casually remarked as Will had quickly wiped his wet hands on his jeans, and Will had never wanted to smack someone across the head more in his life.

So it shouldn’t be surprising that his lunch period wouldn’t be safe either.

“Why Hannibal, how eager you look to see us,” replies Mischa with the usual sarcastic smirk reserved for her brother. “Say, did you change your shirt since I last saw you this morning?”

The smallest hint of irritation flashes across Hannibal’s face and then is gone. The expression is so brief that Will might have missed it had he not been forced to look at Hannibal’s handsome face on a daily basis for weeks.

“How observant of you Mischa.” Hannibal does not sound impressed in the least. “Yes, I had to change my shirt.”

Despite the fact that he’s replying to Mischa, Hannibal’s intense gaze stays locked on Will, who finds himself unsure where to look. His eyes land on Mischa, who is once again looking at her older brother with the devious smile of someone who knows someone’s deepest, darkest secrets.

“Hmm. That’s a very nice shirt. Much nicer than the one you had on this morning.”

“I’m glad you approve.” Once again, Hannibal does not sound glad in the least. “May I sit?”

“You may,” replies Mischa, and Will can’t decide if he’s annoyed or relieved. The shirt does look good. *Too good*, he thinks as his eyes make their way across the broad expanse of Hannibal’s chest and strong shoulders.

Hannibal sits down gracefully, taking out a beautiful ceramic lunch container and opening it to reveal beautifully symmetrical triangular balls of rice, all wrapped with a single piece of seaweed. Hannibal catches Will’s curious gaze and slides the container over with a soft smile.

“Homemade Onigiri - Japanese rice balls wrapped in nori, often stuffed with various fillings. These are filled with umeboshi, and these ones with salted salmon. Would you like one, Will?”

Will looks up, taken off guard by the offer, and finds Hannibal staring at him expectantly. Long, elegant fingers push the container slightly closer to Will's side of the table and, in a moment of panic, he grabs one of the rice balls from the dish.

"What, none for me, Hannibal?"

"We both know I packed your lunch for you this morning, Mischa," replies Hannibal, eyes still locked on Will, "and that you have your own portion in that container sitting in front of you."

"I bet yours are better," she says as she removes the lid from the container to reveal her own collection of perfectly symmetrical rice balls.

"Eat your lunch, Mischa," is Hannibal's only reply as he watches Will slowly bring the rice ball to his lips and take a hesitant bite.

Will shouldn't be surprised of course — everything Hannibal does is done to perfection — but he finds himself emitting a small sound of appreciation as he begins to chew more enthusiastically. Despite the simplicity of the dish, it definitely beats the pathetic excuse for a sandwich he threw together that morning. Of course, the whole thing might be more enjoyable if Hannibal hadn't looked so pleased at the involuntary sound Will had made.

"'s delicious," Will reluctantly admits with a mouth full of rice.

"I'm glad you like it." And to Will's surprise, Hannibal does sound genuinely glad. Something warm blooms in his stomach as a light blush rises to his cheeks and he drops his eyes to the table, finally breaking eye contact with Hannibal.

"So Hannibal," says Mischa, "are you going to Winter Formal next week?"

"I've considered it."

Will looks up at Hannibal's cryptic answer.

"*Considered* it? What's that mean," he asks, too curious for his own good.

"With the right date, I would be willing to attend."

Will is suddenly overcome with a rush of hot, red jealousy at the idea of what Hannibal might consider the *right date*. Probably someone beautiful and high-status, someone sophisticated like Margot Verger. His eyes immediately survey the room until they land on the perfectly-styled back of Margot's head, who sits impeccably dressed at a table with Alana Bloom.

"What about you, Will?" adds Hannibal as Will stares daggers at Margot across the cafeteria. "Any plans to attend Winter Formal."

"Uh - what?" Will's attention is snapped back to the table as his mind tries to catch up to the question. "Yes. I mean, no… I don't know, I - "

“If I had to guess, I would say Will will probably be going with Alana Bloom.” Will looks over to Mischa with a confused frown, wondering what on earth she’s talking about. “God knows she’s been desperate to ask him all week.”

“What? N-no she hasn’t, that’s -” But he’s caught off guard by the cold, murderous glare Hannibal shoots at his sister, who seems unconcerned with Hannibal’s apparent wrath.

“Is that so,” replies Hannibal, but it doesn’t quite sound like a question, and more like a threat. Will isn’t quite sure what’s happening, but he can feel his face heating up.

“That’s ridiculous, Mischa,” he quickly interjects.

“Really? Because here she comes.”

And as if timed and orchestrated by Mischa herself, Alana walks up to their table with a soft blush on her cheeks and a determined look on her face.

“Hi everyone, I was hoping to speak with - ” But before she has a chance to finish her sentence, Hannibal quickly cuts her off, packing up his lunch as he stands up to leave.

“Ah, yes. Thank you for meeting me here Alana. Let’s find a more private place to speak.” Alana turns to him, mouth slightly ajar with a confused look on her face. “Shall we?” adds Hannibal as he places one hand on her shoulder and points to the cafeteria doors with the other.

“Uh… Sure, alright,” mumbles Alana as she follows Hannibal out of the room.

“Goodbye, Will. Mischa.”

“Hannibal,” replies Mischa, before turning to Will and murmuring “What the fuck was that about.”

Will turns to her with an exasperated huff.

“You tell me, he’s *your* brother.”

“Unfortunately,” she says with a frown.

“Does he make your lunch every day?” Will asks, unable to reign in his curiosity, once again.

“Every single day,” she replies cheerfully. “Hannibal is very particular about what we put in our bodies.”

Will looks back down at his sad sandwich and sighs before tossing it in the trash.

———

Hannibal Lecter is taking Alana Bloom to Winter Formal.

Hannibal Lecter is taking *Alana Bloom* to Winter Formal, and Will is *furious.*

He's not sure why he's so upset since he wasn't particularly interested in going to the dance himself, and when Alana had walked towards them that day in the cafeteria, he had felt dread at Mischa's suggestion that she might be walking over to ask him to accompany her. It had almost been a relief to hear that she was actually there to speak with Hannibal, that is, until he had seen Hannibal's hand on her shoulder and had immediately been hit with another overwhelming wave of jealousy.

But the two had walked away and Will had forced himself to think of other things. Better not to focus too much on Hannibal or his social life — the older boy was already wreaking havoc on his mental stability as it was.

Then one day, while packing up his things after class, Chilton had slithered over to ask him how it felt to come second place to Alana Bloom.

"What on earth are you talking about, Chilton."

Chilton had seems thrilled at Will's confusion.

"Oh, you haven't heard? Hannibal is taking Alana to Winter Formal this Saturday."

Immediately, the words 'with the right date' spring to Will's mind and he has to grip the side of his desk to keep his composure.

"Good for them," he manages to grit out. He quickly packs up the rest of his things, hoping to escape this interaction as soon as possible.

"No need to fret, Will. There's always prom."

Will can hear the obnoxious smirk in Chilton's voice and he wonders if he's ever hated someone more than he hates Frederick Chilton at this very moment.

"Thanks, Chilton," he replies sarcastically. "And remind me, who are you taking to Winter Formal again?"

He looks up, making direct eye contact with a flustered Chilton, who blushes as he begins to mumble.

"Ah - well… You know... I - uh."

Before Chilton has time to compose himself and come up with what Will is sure will be a ridiculously elaborate lie, Will grabs his things and leaves the classroom. Only Chilton would be dumb and delusional enough to pick on Will for not having a date when he himself also doesn't have one.

He normally would find the whole thing very funny — would immediately tell Mischa and the two would laugh at how ridiculous Chilton is — but the news has Will feeling like he's just been punched in the gut.

Was Alana who Hannibal had in mind when he had spoken of the right date? Did he *like* Alana?

Alana was a nice enough girl, she was clever and kind, with a big heart, but Will had always found her a bit too… ingratiating. Too "nice." And her fascination with Will clearly stemmed from some deeply rooted savior complex, which had always felt condescending to Will. Of course, that same savior complex probably didn't apply to Hannibal who definitely was not in need of any rescuing from anyone.

"Will!"

Mischa weaves her way through the crowded halls, side-stepping students rushing to their next class, to make her way towards him and Will sighs, wondering if he'll ever get a break from the Lecters or if he's doomed to be tormented by them for the rest of his life. He loves Mischa, he really does, but he's still reeling from his interaction with Chilton and he knows Mischa can read him like a book. She'll know immediately something is off.

"What's wrong? You look dreadful."

Fuck.

"Thanks," replies Will as he begins walking down the hall. Mischa quickly follows.

"Hold up — Will, what is it? You know I can always tell when you're upset."

Will refuses to answer and speeds up instead. He just needs to get to his next class and then he can head home. Today is Thursday, so he'll get through one more school day and then it will be the weekend, when he'll hide in his room under the covers and try his best not to torture himself imagining Hannibal and Alana dressed the the nines, dancing and laughing and kiss -

"Is it Hannibal again? Really Will, I know Hannibal can be a lot but I promise he means well. You need to stop thinking everyone is out to get you, some people really do like you and -"

"Please, Mischa," interrupts Will. "I really don't want to talk about it right now."

Something in his expression or tone of voice must get through to Mischa because she immediately stops, eying him curiously. She looks worried.

"I'm fine, Mischa. I - " Will isn't sure what to tell her. "I'm fine."

"Promise?"

Will has never lied to Mischa and he has no intention of changing that. And yet, he still can't get himself to tell her what's weighing him down.

"I'll be fine. Just go to class."

He arrives to his final class of the day feeling completely drained, wishing he could go home, crawl into bed, and sleep until all of this has passed. Just a few hours, he thinks. A few hours and you'll be home.

He opens his textbook and tries not to think of how good Hannibal and Alana will look side by side on Saturday.

———

On Saturday night, Will finds himself alone at home watching old reruns of Twin Peaks with an untouched bowl of microwave popcorn. He's not quite sure how he did it, but he made it through the week, and only needs to make it through the evening before this nightmare is over.

He's trying to ignore the part of his brain telling him that the evening might go so well that Alana and Hannibal will actually start dating. Will isn't sure how he'll react if he walks into school on Monday to find them both holding hands or making out against a locker like two characters in a network TV teen drama. He pushes his bowl of popcorn away, unsure why he made it to begin with. He hasn't been hungry all day.

His phone rings, displaying Mischa Lecter's name on the screen. He ignores it and turns back to the television. It rings three more times before he gives in and finally picks it up.

"What is it, Mischa. I'm busy."

"Oh really? Doing what, watching X-Files reruns?"

"… It's Twin Peaks, actually."

He hears her sigh on the other end of the line.

"Care to tell me why Alana Bloom just showed up at my house in formal wear?"

Will's stomach drops as he imagines Alana walking up the front steps of Mischa's house in a beautiful dress and Hannibal opening the front door to greet her.

"I don't know, Mischa," he says sarcastically. "If I had to guess, it might have something to do with your brother being her date to Winter Formal."

He knows he sounds like a jerk, but he feels so emotionally drained and simply doesn't have the mental energy for this conversation.

"You knew about this? Oh for god's sake, you two are the biggest idiots I've ever met."

"What do you mean," Will replies with a frown. He lowers the volume on the television, his full focus now on their conversation. "You're telling me you didn't know about this?"

"OF COURSE NOT!"

"Jesus, Mischa. No need to yell," replies Will, pulling the phone away from his ear.

"Yes there is Will — I've had it up to here with both of your bullshit. For two of the smartest people I know, the two of you really are completely clueless when you choose to

be."

"Mischa, what on earth are you talking about."

"It's supposed to be *you*, Will!"

"Huh?"

"Hannibal likes you — he doesn't like Alana, he doesn't like anyone else, he likes *you*. He's been obsessed with you for months now, always asking me about you — 'how's Will; what's Will up to; what does Will like; what's that awful aftershave Will wears' — practically stalking you down the hallways at school. It's exhausti - "

"Wait — hold on. What are you saying," asks Will whose heart is now racing in his chest. "If this is a joke, it really isn't funny."

"Who the hell would joke about something like that, Will," asks a frustrated and exasperated Mischa. Hearing those words coming from her, Will does start to wonder if he's completely misread the situation. His stomach does several flips at the thought alone.

"Are you saying… You mean that…" He can't seem to finish the sentence. The idea itself still seems so preposterous that he's still not convinced Mischa won't laugh at him the second he says it.

"Will, listen to me — Hannibal likes you. He likes you a lot. And he rarely likes anybody, so trust me when I tell you it means something."

Will feels lightheaded and almost drops the phone as he processes Mischa's words.

"And you like him too, and don't you dare lie to me about it. You think I don't see the forlorn sad puppy eyes you look at him with any time he walks into a room? I can basically hear your brain short-circuiting anytime he looks at you."

"Excuse me? 'Forlorn sad puppy eyes'? I think that's a bit of a stretch — "

"That's me being generous," she says with a derisive scoff. "The two of you look at each other like you're pining forbidden lovers in a Victorian period drama." Will feels himself start to blush at Mischa's words. It can't be *that* bad, can it?

"It's almost as bad as Adam Raki and his terrifying boyfriend. Actually, it's worst because at least Adam and his boyfriend are getting laid, so they don't look as tortured all the time — "

"Actually, they haven't had sex yet." Will isn't sure why he says it. It clearly isn't where Mischa is going with this conversation.

"What — that really doesn't matter Will — look, I need you to trust me on this. I've kept out of it, hoping the two of you would figure this out on your own, but that clearly isn't happening."

Will rolls his eyes as he remembers the algebra homework fiasco. Sure, *kept out of it.*

“I think you should go talk to him.”

“I don’t know, Mischa…”

“Will, I swear to god, if you don’t go to talk to him *this instant* I will never speak to you again.”

“*Mischa*, he’s with Alana right now, they’re probably at the dance already.” Will feels a pang of anger as he says the words. Why is Hannibal at Winter Formal with Alana if he does in fact like Will. “And what’s that about anyway? Why invite Alana as his date if he’s so obsessed with me.”

“Because he got desperate, obviously, and wanted to make you jealous.”

Will can’t help but be frustrated at how well Hannibal’s plan worked.

“He could have just talked to me.”

“Right, because talking to you is SO easy.” He can almost hear Mischa’s eye-roll over the phone. Will thinks back to his most recent interactions with Hannibal and has to admit he has been rather… difficult. He mentally revisits his past conversations with Hannibal and, with this new information, suddenly sees them in a completely different light. Had Hannibal been genuine in his interest this entire time?

“Look,” says Mischa with a sigh, interrupting his train of thought. “I don’t know how far Hannibal will go with this little scheme of his, but I would get there sooner rather than later.”

Panic sets in as Will understands what Mischa is hinting at. If he’s trying to make Will jealous, Hannibal will likely try to sell this thing with Alana as genuine, which would entail being seen together, dancing together, kissing, maybe more —

“Fuck.”

Will jumps off the couch and runs up the stairs to the kitchen to grab his keys and wallet. Thankfully, while his dad is out tonight, he did leave the car for Will so he should be able to get there in less than thirty minutes if he drives fast.

“Finally!” exclaims Mischa before hanging up the phone, but Will barely hears her as he pulls on his shoes, not bothering to untie the laces as he rushes out the front door.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Final chapter!!

Well, that took longer than planned... Sorry about that-- I got really sick and was basically out of commission for a few weeks. But as a treat, this one is extra long! :)

Thank you to everyone who read this follow-up story and left kudos and comments! <3

“Slightly under-dressed, Graham. Even by your standards.”

Will sighs, rolling his eyes at the grating sound of Frederick Chilton’s voice. *Of course*, this would be the first person he runs into.

Will had rushed out of his house in a state of utter panic and completely overlooked the fact that he was driving to a formal event wearing a pair of jeans, a t-shirt, and a flannel. He had been in such a hurry that he hadn’t even grabbed a coat, despite the cold weather.

Finding himself surrounded by all his classmates in their best attire, he now feels a bit foolish, but he easily shakes the feeling off. He doesn’t plan on being here for long.

“I’m not here for the stupid dance, Chilton.”

As Will looks across the room in an attempt to spot Hannibal and Alana, Chilton places himself directly in his line of sight, blocking him from the rest of the room.

“Do you mind,” he says, trying to peek over the shoulder of Chilton’s tacky, all-white, most likely designer suit.

“Aw, still trying to find yourself a date?” Will ignores Chilton as he steps around him. He *really* doesn’t have time for this. “Now that’s a shame. Especially since even total weirdos like Adam Raki have managed to hoodwink someone into accompanying them.”

Will had barely been paying attention to Chilton, eyes scanning the room for Hannibal in what he assumes will be the most extravagantly flamboyant ensemble he’s ever seen. But at the mention of Adam’s name, he immediately turns to glare at Chilton who appears even more smug and self-satisfied than usual. Following the direction of Chilton’s gaze, he looks over to Adam and Nigel, who are sitting alone at a table, hunched over whispering to one another. Nigel is looking down at Adam with what can only be described as pure adoration, and Will can’t help but feel like he’s intruding.

“Have you ever seen anything more ridiculous than those two — like a lab rat dating a pit bull.”

Will feels blinding rage simmering below his skin as Chilton snickers at his side. He’s debating whether he should risk punching Chilton in the face, knowing it might mean getting kicked out before he manages to find Hannibal, when he feels a looming presence behind them and the weight of a heavy hand on his and Chilton’s shoulders.

“Eh — little Freddy Chilton’s got jokes!”

Will watches the color drain from Chilton’s face as he looks over his shoulder to see the burly frame of Darko, Nigel’s best friend, looking down at him with a dangerous grin.

“You know who really likes jokes? My pal Nigel.” Chilton’s eyes widen at the other boy’s name. “HEY NIGEL.”

At the sound of his name, Nigel’s head snaps towards Darko with a murderous look in his eyes.

“Not right now, you shit head, I’m busy.”

“Trust me, fuckhead. You’re gonna want to hear this.”

There’s a dangerous look in Nigel’s eyes as he evaluates the situation, looking over the odd trio awkwardly standing together. But something in the way Darko looks at him must tell him what he needs to know, and his eyes narrow slightly as he leans over to whisper something in Adam’s ear. Chilton attempts to make a run for it as Adam and Nigel stand up and begin walking toward them, but Darko’s grip on his shoulder is too tight and holds him in place.

“What the fuck is this about,” asks Nigel once they’ve both reached the rest of the group.

“Hello, Will.”

Adam is wearing a black suit and black dress shirt, and Will notices for the first time that Nigel seems to be wearing the same thing. He isn’t sure if the matching outfits were intentional but he has to admit they make quite the pair.

“Hi, Adam,” replies Will with his first genuine smile of the evening. Adam looks so happy and content by Nigel’s side, completely clueless as to what’s about to happen. Going off of the dangerous look in Nigel’s eyes though, the older boy knows *exactly* what’s about to happen.

He knows Adam has heard worst than Chilton’s sniveling remarks but he still feels the urge to protect him from being bullied on an evening that had clearly been going so well until now.

“Adam, would you like to sit down with me for a bit?”

Nigel’s eyes flicker towards Will before returning to Adam as he says, “Gorgeous, why don’t you go hang out with your friend.”

Will has interacted with Nigel a few times but, clearly, the older boy never bothered to learn his name. Were it anyone else, it might bother him more than it does, but Will figures that unless your name is Adam Raki it's probably best to stay off of Nigel's radar whenever possible.

Adam looks slightly flustered as he looks between Will and his boyfriend.

"But I would rather be with you, Nigel."

Nigel's gaze immediately softens as he looks down at Adam, gently running his hand through the younger boy's thick curls.

"I know, love. I'd rather be with you as well. I just have to take care of this first. I'll be with you as soon as I'm done, alright?"

Adam smiles and nods before following Will to the nearest table. They sit down and the first words out of Adam's mouth are, "I think Nigel is about to fight."

Will should have known better than to assume Adam wouldn't catch on to what was happening. Especially since this must be a fairly common occurrence with Nigel.

"Probably," he says, "but trust me, Chilton deserves it."

He can't help but smile as he watches Chilton trying to talk his way out of the enormous hole he's dug for himself. Darko now stands behind him, with both hands on his shoulders as Nigel leers down at him menacingly.

"Are you here to find Hannibal?"

"NO." Will flinches at how unusually loud his voice is, knowing it would sound suspicious to anyone other than Adam. "Um, but now that you mention it. Have you seen Hannibal tonight?"

Adam smiles and nods. "Are you going to tell him you like him?"

Will blushes and pulls back slightly. He's about to deny this as well, invent some excuse as to why he's seeking out Hannibal, but changes his mind. He knows Adam isn't judging him, and the other boy had clearly figured out whatever was happening between him and Hannibal before he had.

"Yeah, actually. I think so."

"Good," is Adam's only reply as his eyes turn back to his boyfriend who is now holding Chilton up by the lapels of his very expensive suit.

"Could you — um… Could you tell me where you've seen him?"

"Sure," says Adam, turning back towards him. "He's sitting at that table at the back corner of the room. With Alana Bloom."

Will spots Alana and Hannibal sitting with a few people at one of the many round, white table-clothed tables. He gets up to walk towards them when he hears a commotion and turns to see that Nigel has fully lifted a squealing Chilton off the ground. Chilton's legs kick like a toddler's as Nigel shoves him against the closest wall, and Darko stands behind him, laughing loudly.

"I should probably step in," calmly says Adam as he begins to walk towards them.

"Adam, wait — " says Will, trying to stop the other boy, but Adam walks confidently until he stands a few feet away from Nigel, who is too focused on terrorizing Chilton to notice.

Great, thinks Will as he follows closely behind.

"Nigel, I'd like for us to have sex tonight."

Everyone freezes on the spot as soon as Adam has uttered the words, including Will who now also stands a few feet away. Even Chilton, suspended with his feet in the air, one dress shoe fallen to the freshly waxed hardwood floor, stares at Adam with wide eyes and a comically gaping mouth.

"I'm sorry, gorgeous, what did you just say?" Nigel's face is calm and expressionless but his full attention is now on Adam, his eyes locked on him with a heated intensity. Adam stands before him with a small smile, looking as nonchalant as ever.

"I said I'd like for us to have sex tonight. But I have to be home by 11 PM, so we should probably leave now if we want to have enough time to — "

Nigel's eyes go wide as he immediately drops Chilton to the ground. Chilton's body makes a loud thumping noise as it crashes on the hardwood floor, crumpling over itself like a discarded marionette. Nigel marches towards Adam with an awe-struck look on his face.

"Come here you perfect fucking angel," growls Nigel as he picks Adam off the ground and walks them towards the exit. Adam laughs as he's lifted up, wrapping his arms around Nigel's shoulders, and Will breathes a sigh of relief as the two leave the room.

As Darko lifts Chilton off the floor and drags him out of the room, picking up where Nigel left off, Will turns back towards Hannibal and Alana's table to find that they're no longer there. He feels himself start to panic as he quickly scans the room but soon finds them walking towards the tacky photo booth with its horrendous "under the sea" theme.

Will rolls his eyes knowing full well there is *no way* Hannibal Lecter wants to get his picture taken in front of a bright turquoise backdrop covered in cartoonish turtles and blowfish. He would be impressed with Hannibal's dedication to this scheme if he wasn't so infuriated by it.

He storms over, navigating his way through the people and tables until he finds himself face-to-face with Hannibal and Alana.

Alana looks lovely in a dark blue satin dress but Will barely notices, his eyes glued to Hannibal and his perfectly tailored satin trimmed maroon velvet dinner jacket. Hannibal always looks handsome but Will finds himself taken off guard by how absolutely perfect he looks. He stands there speechless for a few seconds until Hannibal's words pull him out of his daze.

"Hello, Will. Interesting choice of attire," he says while looking Will up and down, and Will's frustration returns immediately.

"I need to talk to you," he says ignoring Hannibal's comment. "NOW."

Alana, who looks confused, steps between them and places her hand on Will's shoulder.

"Will, what's happening, are you alright?"

"I'm fine Alana, I just need to speak with Hannibal," he says between gritted teeth, shaking her hand off. His gaze stays locked on Hannibal, whose eyes have a devious sparkle to them. He looks thrilled, the bastard.

"Surely this can wait — "

"It's fine Alana, I'll be right back, in time for our next dance," interrupts Hannibal, and Will sees red.

"Like hell you will, you son of a bitch." The words escape his lips before he has time to stop them and Alana gasps beside him. Hannibal's eyebrows lift in amusement as a small smirk appears on his face, and despite how furious Will is, he can't help himself from finding the older boy infuriatingly handsome.

"*Will*! Look, I was going to ask you to be my date but Hannibal asked me first. Honestly, if you wanted me to go to Winter Formal with you, you should have done something about it, I — "

"What?" says Will, interrupting her abruptly. "That's fine Alana, don't worry about it." He has no time for Alana's nonsense and swiftly grabs Hannibal by the arm, marching them both out of the room. While he doesn't make eye contact with the older boy, he can feel him staring at the back of his head and ignores the shiver it sends down his spine.

They make it to the hallway and Will quickly realizes he has no idea where to go. This year's Winter Formal is being held at the local country club, which Will has never stepped foot in before tonight.

"This way." The words are said softly as Hannibal senses his hesitation, pulling him in the right direction. *Of course,* Hannibal knows his way around the country club, thinks Will with an eye-roll.

Hannibal walks them to a dark empty room with wood paneling and large, expensive-looking leather chairs surrounding a massive mahogany table. If Will had had to imagine what a room in a country club might look like, this would have been exactly it.

“Well, what’s this about Will.”

Will can’t remember the last time he has been completely alone in a room with Hannibal. Had it been when Hannibal had helped him with his homework? God, that was weeks, if not months ago.

His heart is in his throat as he stares at the older boy feeling embarrassingly under-dressed. But another part of him is furious — furious at Hannibal for making things so confusing and complicated, but also furious at Frederick Chilton and Mason Verger for making him believe he was a worthless joke, furious at Mischa for keeping this secret for so long, and furious at himself for letting his own insecurities blind him to what had been staring him in the face this whole time. He’s determined to end this entire charade right here, right now.

“You know exactly what this is about, Hannibal.”

Hannibal’s face remains fully expressionless, his only reaction a slight tilt of the head.

“Is that so.”

“God, you’re infuriating,” mutters Will as he walks towards Hannibal, stopping mere inches from the other boy. “Why are you here with Alana, Hannibal?”

Hannibal’s eyebrows rise as if to convey surprise, but something in his eyes tells Will the reaction is feigned.

“One usually brings a date to these kinds of events, Will. Alana is a lovely girl and she agreed to accompany me.” With a pointed edge to his voice, Hannibal adds, “I do wonder why this bothers you as much as it does.”

Will smirks at the words but stays silent. His eyes lock with Hannibal’s who is staring back at him with amused curiosity. So this is how it’s going to be then, thinks Will.

“You’re not going to say it, are you.”

“Whatever it is you would like for me to say, you clearly refuse to say as well.”

Will takes a step closer and the two are nose to nose, closer than they’ve ever been before. Hannibal’s eyes seem to be darting across Will’s face as if cataloging his features, but Will’s eyes fall directly to Hannibal’s plush, curved lips. This close, all he would have to do is lean forward and they would be kissing. The thought alone makes him shiver.

“You have feelings for me.” The words come out softer than Will had intended, almost whispered intimately between them.

“Well yes, I’d say that’s fairly obvious, Will,” answers Hannibal nonchalantly, and Will takes a step back in surprise. If Will didn’t know any better, he’d say Hannibal looks disappointed at this new distance between them.

“What do you mean ‘obvious!’ Hannibal, if it’s true, why are you here with Alana *fucking* Bloom!”

Hannibal releases a small huff, seeming frustrated for the first time since they've started this conversation.

"I fail to see why I should abstain from attending school events simply because you aren't interested in attending them with me."

"Who said I wasn't interested," replies Will meekishly, a blush rising to his cheeks.

"I've made my intentions quite clear, Will. Mischa has been asking me to stop 'stalking her best friend' for weeks now." Hannibal finally breaks eye contact with Will, suddenly hesitant. "So if anything should be said, I think it ought to come from you."

Will stares at him, wide-eyed, unsure what to say. Hannibal Lecter is feeling insecure. *Hannibal* is feeling insecure because of *Will*. Infuriatingly beautiful, perfect Hannibal Lecter is worried *Will* doesn't like *him*. The idea is so ridiculous that Will can't help letting out a sharp burst of erratic, slightly unhinged laughter.

Hannibal frowns, clearly not seeing the humor in the situation.

"Really, Will, there's no need to be rude — "

"Oh, shut up," interrupts Will as he steps forward, grabbing Hannibal's face with both hands and pulling him down for a kiss. The older boy freezes momentarily as their lips first make contact, but quickly catches on, returning the kiss with enthusiastic hunger. Wrapping one arm around Will's waist and cupping the back of his head with the other, Hannibal pulls Will tightly against himself, tilting his head to better slot their lips together, and Will feels his knees buckle as his brain turns to mush.

For months, he has been dreaming, day and night, of kissing Hannibal Lecter, and it's a relief to see the experience still manages to surpass his expectations. He feels his entire body heating up as he runs his hands through Hannibal's soft hair, moaning as he feels the older boy's tongue softly glide against his lower lip.

He soon finds himself backed up against the large mahogany table and he gasps in shock as Hannibal lifts him up by his waist to sit him on the tabletop.

"Showoff," he manages to mutter as Hannibal presses hot open-mouthed kisses against the overheated skin of his neck. He feels, rather than hears, Hannibal laugh softly against his throat as the older boy's hands roam against his chest and back. Hannibal bites lightly at his jugular and Will lets out an embarrassingly needy, high-pitched noise, but is too pleasantly distracted to care.

Right as Will pulls Hannibal's head up for another heated kiss, the door flies opens, revealing Mrs. Purnell, who squeals in shock at the sight of them sprawled against the table desperately groping one another.

"What in god's name — Hannibal Lecter and… is that Will Graham?" Will quickly pulls away, readjusting his flannel back onto his shoulders and sliding off the table. Hannibal

quickly straightens himself out, looking as composed as ever if you ignore how wild and disheveled his hair is.

“Hello, Mrs. Purnell. Will and I were just — ”

“Working on a school project? Yeah, I bet. Out of here *this instant*. No one is supposed to be in this part of the building.”

Will accidentally lets out a snort, trying not to laugh as they exit the room. Hannibal has a blank, neutral expression on his face but when he looks over at Will, his eyes are dancing with amusement.

“I expected more from you, Hannibal. I’m quite disappointed.”

“Disappointed you found him *in flagrante*,” Will knows it’s a bad idea the second the words start coming out of his mouth, but he can’t help himself. “Or disappointed that it was with me?”

“*Don’t start with me, Will Graham*. I want to see you both in detention after school on Monday, is that clear?”

“Of course, Mrs. Purnell,” responds Hannibal in a polite, placating tone.

“Now get back to the main hall and stay out of trouble,” she says watching them to make sure they return to the banquet hall.

As they enter the room and are hit with the colorful spinning lights of the dance floor, Will looks down at his worn flannel, remembering how under-dressed he is for the occasion. He never even bothered to buy a ticket for Winter Formal, which means he’s technically crashing the event.

“I should probably go,” he says reluctantly, turning to Hannibal who is looking at him with a soft, adoring smile.

“I’ll come with you,” he immediately responds, and Will smiles back, feeling warmth pool in his stomach.

“There you are — is everything alright?!”

Reluctantly, Will looks away from Hannibal to watch Alana rushing towards them.

Right. Alana. Hannibal’s date. Who Hannibal came with tonight. *Fuck.*

“Alana. I’m glad we found you.”

He is? Will thinks, frowning at Hannibal.

“What’s happening, Hannibal?” asks Alana, and Will finds himself wondering the same thing.

“I had a lovely evening with you Alana, but I’m afraid Will and must be on our way.”

Alana gapes at him like one of the sparkly fish covering the Under the Sea photo backdrop.

“I apologize for the sudden change of plans. I will leave the car with you and let the driver know he should bring you home.”

Alana stands frozen for a moment, clearly needing some time to process what’s happening, but once she’s recovered she looks furious.

“Let me get this straight. You’re leaving me halfway through the night. To leave with *Will*.”

Will’s head pivots back and forth between Alana and Hannibal as he follows their interaction.

“That’s correct,” replies Hannibal, calm as ever.

Alana’s furious gaze finds Will who, until now, had been standing as quietly as possible in the hopes of going unnoticed, and her eyes narrow as they zero in on the collar of his shirt.

“I’m sorry, is that a *hickey* on your neck, Will?”

Will’s eyes widen as his hand slaps against his neck reflexively, in an attempt to hide whatever Alana might see there. Did Hannibal give him a *hickey*?

“Uhh..” is the only flustered response he manages to utter before Hannibal cuts him off.

“I see no point in lying to you Alana. There had been a misunderstanding between Will and I, but we have both come to — ”

“Oh save it, Hannibal.” Hannibal is clearly irritated by the interruption but allows Alana to continue. “I should have listened to Margot. This is absolutely ridiculous.” Without saying goodbye or looking at either of them, Alana abruptly turns and walks away. “Freddie Lounds would fucking *love* this,” is the last thing Will hears from her as she weaves her way through the crowd toward the back table where Margot, Beth, and Beverly are sitting.

“Shall we?” Will feels Hannibal’s hand press softly between his shoulder blades as the older boy guides him towards the exit.

“I guess so,” he replies, still reeling from their interaction with Alana. “You sure you don’t want your picture taken with the fish banner?”

Hannibal’s smile falls abruptly as he replies, “Absolutely not.”

Will’s finger anxiously tap against the steering wheel as he stares directly ahead, into the darkened school parking lot.

“Are you alright, Will?”

Will jumps at the sound of Hannibal's voice, quickly turning towards the other boy sitting next to him in the car.

"Um, yeah. Of course. I just…" He nervously runs a hand through his hair as he lets out a shaky sigh, desperately trying to calm himself down. "I just hadn't really planned for this part. I'm not sure what to do now."

He half expects Hannibal to laugh at him but instead, the older boy smiles warmly as he reaches over to brush one of Will's stray curls back in place. He leans over and presses a soft, reassuring kiss to Will's lips.

"No plan required. We can go wherever you would like." And for the first time, Will lets himself believe Hannibal's words — believe that in this moment, the older boy wants to be with him.

"Ok," he replies, returning Hannibal's soft smile and pulling him back in for a longer, deeper kiss. Hannibal eventually pulls away, resting his forehead against Will's as he cups the younger boy's face with both hands.

"I almost wish I had had the forethought to book a hotel room for tonight," Hannibal has the subtlest hint of a frown as he says the words, and Will's anxiety is immediately replaced by scalding hot jealousy as he pulls away.

"Well, I *definitely* fucking don't!"

Will knows he should be embarrassed at the outburst but feels himself fuming just imagining what *might* have happened had Hannibal gotten a hotel room for him and Alana.

"No need to fret, Will," replies Hannibal with a pleased grin. "Nothing was ever going to happen between Alana and I.

"Yeah, well let's not risk it," says Will as he starts the car and starts backing them out of their parking spot. "I'm getting us both out of here before you change your mind."

He feels the warmth of Hannibal's hand as it covers his on the gearstick and a spark of electricity shoots up his spine.

"I'm afraid nothing could change my mind. I am entirely at your mercy, Will."

"Good," Will replies, turning his hand to lace their fingers together as he drives them into the night.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!